



**North American Exclusive Premiere
Showcases Ancient Cargo Lost at Sea:
The Lost Dhow Exhibition Opens December 13
at the Aga Khan Museum**

Exhibition of rare artifacts from 9th-century China confirms Maritime Silk Route

Toronto, December 8, 2014 – Travelling for the first time outside of Singapore for its North American premiere, the exhibition *The Lost Dhow: A Discovery from the Maritime Silk Route* opens at the Aga Khan Museum on December 13.

In 1998 the shallow waters off Belitung Island in the western Java Sea yielded what would prove to be the earliest and most important marine archaeological discovery of the 20th century: a ship laden with gold, silver, and bronze objects – in addition to 57,500 Chinese ceramic artifacts. No human remains were found on board, but coins and other personal effects revealed remarkable details about the crew’s origins. Ultimately identified as an Arab dhow approximately 1,200 years old, the ship provided the first hard evidence of a Maritime Silk Route that saw the vibrant exchange of goods, ideas, and technologies between Tang China and the Abbasid Empire.

For the first time ever in North America, a stunning array of artifacts from this cargo is on display at the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto. Jointly organized by the Asian Civilisations Museum of Singapore, the Singapore Tourism Board, and the Aga Khan Museum, the exhibition *The Lost Dhow: A Discovery from the Maritime Silk Route* runs from December 13, 2014, to April 26, 2015 with a full complement of multi-disciplinary programming. “This exhibition beautifully shows that creative exchanges between China and the Islamic world were fully under way one thousand years ago,” notes Alan Chong, Director of Singapore’s Asian Civilisations Museum. Henry Kim, Director and CEO of the Aga Khan Museum, adds, “*The Lost Dhow* exhibition is a natural fit with the Aga Khan Museum. The cross-cultural exchange exemplified by the dhow’s cargo is exactly what our collection and programming both celebrate and explore.”

Highlights of the exhibition include:

- **A green-splashed ewer** featuring a handle in the form of a lion with a dragon-head spout and ring-handled cups, among nearly 200 pieces of white ceramics decorated with splashes of bright green that were found with other higher-value items of cargo from the Belitung shipwreck. Chemical analysis of broken pieces from the wreck suggests they were produced at the Gongxian kilns in Henan Province, renowned for its undecorated white wares.
- **A white ware cup stand**, among about 300 pieces of white-glazed wares made in northern China at the Xing and Ding kilns in Hebei Province. High-fired white wares approaching porcelain in translucency and hardness were an innovation of northern Chinese kilns during the Tang dynasty. Highly prized by Chinese aristocrats because of their perceived similarity to luxury silver dishes, these wares were also coveted in foreign markets, particularly in West Asia where they were imitated.



- **A gold cup**, which is completely unique among the items recovered from the cargo. Gold acquired great value in Chinese culture during the Tang dynasty. The shape of this vessel, metallurgical technology, and drinking of grape wine came from West Asia.

The Lost Dhow: A Discovery from the Maritime Silk Route is guest-curated by John Vollmer, an internationally recognized curator and scholar in the fields of Asian art, textiles and costume, decorative arts, and design. An international symposium, a film series, and performances by Silk Road–inspired musicians such as Wu Man, Kayhan Kalhor, and Sandeep Das are among the programming initiatives that will provide historical context for the exhibition and encourage conversation about the importance of preserving and sharing maritime heritage. A richly illustrated publication written by Simon Worrall and published by the Aga Khan Museum accompanies the exhibition.

For more information about the Aga Khan Museum, its upcoming exhibitions, and its programming, please visit www.agakhanmuseum.org.

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Notes to Editors:

The exhibition *The Lost Dhow: A Discovery from the Maritime Silk Route* has received support from PSA International Pte Ltd and Temasek Holdings (Private) Limited. The objects in the exhibition are from the Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore. Acquisition of the Tang Shipwreck Collection was made possible by the Estate of Khoo Teck Puat. The recovery and conservation of the collection was undertaken by Tilman Walterfang.

Opened to the public on September 18, 2014, the **Aga Khan Museum in Toronto** is dedicated to presenting an overview of the artistic, intellectual, and scientific contributions that Muslim civilizations have made to world heritage. The Museum has been established and developed by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), which is an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN).

The Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) focuses on the physical, social, cultural, and economic revitalization of communities in the developing world, but some of its programs, including the Aga Khan Museum, span both the developed and developing worlds. AKTC is composed of several individual programs and units: the Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme (<http://www.akdn.org/hcp/>), which promotes the conservation and reuse of buildings and public spaces in ways that spur socio-economic development; the Aga Khan Award for Architecture (<http://www.akdn.org/architecture/>), which awards a prize for architecture every three years; the Aga Khan Music Initiative (http://www.akdn.org/aktc_music_about.asp), which supports talented musicians and music educators who strive to preserve, transmit, and further develop their musical heritage in contemporary forms; the online architectural resource ArchNet.org (www.archnet.org); and the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (<http://web.mit.edu/akpia/www/>).

The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), a private, international, non-denominational development organization, is active in 30 countries and employs over 80,000 people globally. Its 10 agencies address complex development issues, including the provision of quality healthcare and education services, cultural and economic revitalization, micro-enterprise, entrepreneurship and economic development, the advancement of civil society, and the protection of the environment.